

ery of microenterprise services. It makes both individual and group loans and provides business training through local community-based partners. These partners identify potential borrowers and underwrite their loans. This is community action at its best, growing the economy at the grassroots. And we have another winner in this category as well. [Laughter]

From its base in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Working Capital also provides small loans to groups of businessowners who form peer groups. To further help the cause, Working Capital created the microenterprise toolkit, a step-by-step guide to starting a microenterprise program. This innovation will help spawn a whole new wave of entrepreneurs, something all of us can cheer. For their leaps in creativity, the awards for excellence in program innovation go to Billy Ray Hall of the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center and Jeffrey Ashe of Working Capital. Let's give them a hand. [Applause]

The Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund is a model of public-private partnership. It is an intermediary, raising money from public and private sources to build a statewide grassroots network of microfunds. In just a short time, the Partnership Fund has sown the seeds of a strong network of microenterprise, demonstrating that Federal, State, and local government can in fact work with community-based organizations to support the smallest businesses.

The Self-Employment Learning Project of Washington, DC, is the preeminent effort to research and evaluate the development of microenterprise and the people it serves in the United States. It has been instrumental in setting down the foundation for the growth of microenterprise and promoting its potential as a road to economic opportunity. Before the Learning Project was established in 1991, there was little information on microenterprise, and well, here we are today celebrating them and more information. It has been a real engine in our progress, and I hope today that we are helping the Self-Employment Learning Project to get more information out about this around the country. For their fine work, they receive awards for excellence in public or private support of

microenterprise development: Gene Severens of the Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund and Peggy Clark of the Self-Employment Learning Project.

Again, let me thank all of you for being here. Again, I thank Secretary Rubin. I also want to thank Brian Atwood of AID and Phil Lader, the Small Business Administrator, for their intense support of our microenterprise efforts.

And let me say, as all of you know, we have only scratched the surface. And I hope by our being together here today you will go home reenergized. And I hope that because of the publicity this event generates, you will all get hundreds of calls asking you—[laughter]—how more communities and more neighborhoods can become involved in this great endeavor. And I hope that we can depend upon Senator Kennedy and Congressman Davis to have yet another good project to become evangelical about. [Laughter]

Thank you all very much, and good day. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:53 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Proclamation 6970—National African American History Month, 1997

January 30, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For much of the past century, the contributions that African Americans and other minorities have made to our Nation's progress were not fully recognized. African American History Month is an important means by which we help right that wrong. It awakens our collective social conscience to the importance of giving all of our children a complete and accurate record of their country's history. And, perhaps most important, it helps to reinforce America's highest ideals—our respect for diversity, community, and freedom.

During this time of celebration and learning we are inspired by the courage, wisdom,

and vision of men and women such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Carter G. Woodson, and Fannie Lou Hamer. These great Americans dedicated their lives to ensuring that the ideals of freedom and equality are guaranteed to all. Their noble efforts—and the efforts of those they inspired—renewed the spirit of our founding creed: “All men are created equal.” As we approach the 21st century, it is more vital than ever that we remain vigilant in protecting the ideals these visionary leaders fought so hard to uphold. We must continue to extend the circle of equality, justice, and opportunity until it embraces every American.

As we pay homage to our past, throughout the month of February and all year long, let us, with enlightened minds and emboldened hearts, continue the legacy of the civil rights movement. Let us present a diverse but united front to those who would reverse the vital progress that has been made. As the world’s beacon of hope and freedom, let us approach the new millennium keeping this vigil.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 1997 as National African American History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs that raise awareness of African American history.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., February 3, 1997]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on February 4.

Executive Order 13034—Extension of Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses

January 30, 1997

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Extension. The Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses (the “Committee”), established pursuant to Executive Order 12961 of May 26, 1995, is hereby extended for the purposes set forth herein. All provisions of that order relating to membership and administration shall remain in effect. All Committee appointments, as well as the President’s designation of a Chairperson, shall remain in effect. The limitations set forth in section 2(c)–(e) and section 4(a) of Executive Order 12961 shall also remain in effect. The Committee shall remain subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

Sec. 2. Functions. (a) The Committee shall report to the President through the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(b) The Committee shall have two principal roles:

(1) Oversight of the ongoing investigation being conducted by the Department of Defense with the assistance, as appropriate, of other executive departments and agencies into possible chemical or biological warfare agent exposures during the Gulf War; and

(2) Evaluation of the Federal Government’s plan for and progress towards the implementation of the Committee’s recommendations contained in its Final Report submitted on December 31, 1996.

(c) The Committee shall provide advice and recommendations related to its oversight and evaluation responsibilities.

(d) The Committee may also provide additional advice and recommendations prompted by any new developments related to its original functions as set forth in section 2(b) of Executive Order 12961.